

Trip Report:

Shari Coleman, Unalaska City Council

Alaska Municipal League Annual Conference 2023, December 6-8

Anchorage, Alaska at the Dena'ina Center

The Alaska Municipal League Annual Conference 2023 featured a diverse and comprehensive schedule on Thursday, December 7th, covering a range of topics relevant to city governance and development. The keynote speaker was Victoria Woodards from the City of Tacoma and featured the Local Infrastructure Hub: A national program designed to connect cities with resources and advice. In addition to the opening remarks, Congressional delegate addresses and the business meeting, the following is a summary of the conference sessions I attended:

**\*\*Implementation of Carbon Offset Program\*\***

Moderated by Beth Weldon, City & Borough of Juneau

-Trevor Fulton, Dept. of Natural Resources. The Carbon Offset Program was signed in May 2023, SB 48 under the DNR. It is comprised of a compliance market and voluntary market, but the State is not forcing compliance now. Nature-based carbon offsets, like using a nature source like trees to pull carbon from the air. State offers credit and then sold to buyers with emissions. It is a new program under development, and the regulation language is in process. Most of it is forestry-based but could also include kelp forest (blue carbon). All projects are available to municipalities.

e-mail [trevor.fulton@alaska.gov](mailto:trevor.fulton@alaska.gov). [dnr.alaska.gov/carbon](http://dnr.alaska.gov/carbon)

**\*\*Cities of Opportunity and Social Determinants of Health\*\***

Moderated by Alicia Hughes-Skandijis

Life expectancy can be estimated by zip code. Policies (politicians) have more effect on a person's health than doctors. Look for social equities in the community, such as keeping everyone safe. Needs of a community requires an assessment, including education, health care, economic stability, neighborhood, social and community context.

**\*\*Strengthening Coastal Resilience \*\***

Moderated by Pat Branson, City of Kodiak

Liz Mack, Denali Commission; Leslie Anne Jones, State of Alaska; Sheyna Wisdom, Alaska Ocean Observing System; Jaci Overbeck, NOAA. The SOA is using geospatial technologies for decision making. AOOS provides ocean systems for ocean uses, and NOAA engages in coastal management.

**\*\*Coastal Caucus\*\***

Discussion lead by Robert Venables, Southeast Conference

**\*\*Leveraging Generative AI – Effective Use of ChatGPT\*\***

Moderated by Felix Rivera, Municipality of Anchorage

- Kyle Easterly from Pango Technology presented on the effective use of ChatGPT. Use of ChatGPT for first drafts, summarizing, translations, translate to comprehensive reading levels, document composition, editing, and search tool. Embrace AI tools and encourage responsible use. First and foremost, programs like ChatGPT are not foolproof, and one should always check the material before

finalizing. Plan of it being used by municipalities, so policies need to be written to address the use of AI. Good example of an AI policy is the City of San Jose and the Government AI Coalition. This was probably the most interesting of all the topics at the conference. In fact, my framework of this report was AI generated.

**\*\*Tax Talk – News, Dos, and Don'ts\*\***

- Clinton Singletary and Joseph Caissie from the Alaska Municipal League provided updates and advice on taxes.

Update tax codes, especially those on digital goods and services. Recommend code definition for “digital goods”. Taxes should not be applied to freight forwarded purchases, such as in Washington State.

The conference covered a wide range of topics crucial for city council members, offering insights and best practices for effective governance and development in Alaska.